

Improving Memory & Retention

NINE WAYS TO AID YOUR MEMORY

1. **Be Flexible:** Try new learning styles.
2. **Make a List:** Create a framework and organize ideas.
3. **Review:** Practice and review materials.
4. **Get Involved:** Find an emotional connection to your work.
5. **Schedule:** Be strategic about studying.
6. **Use a Support:** Create tables, charts, and other aids as needed.
7. **Rephrase:** Use your own words to explain concepts.
8. **Avoid Distractions:** Turn off T.V., phone, and other electronics

Eliminate Mistakes: Review prior mistakes and reinforce proper response

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. Attention (Concentration)

We may be able to do several things at once if some of them are habitual, but we can only attend to one thing at a time, especially when studying. Often when we say we have forgotten something – it would be closer to the truth to say we never learned it because we never gave it proper attention.

2. Interest

Inattention is often due to lack of interest. The subject of most interest to everyone is himself or herself. Take sides in the issues and problems you read about. Ego involvement not only promotes interest and attention, it aids intention to remember. Give

an "uninteresting subject" a chance; if you learn something about it, this will create some interest which will promote knowledge. Remind yourself, if necessary, of your secondary interest in the subject-the grade or credit. Nonsense material (material which we do not understand) is quickly forgotten. While the assignment may be nonsense to us at first, attempts to work through it step by step – interpreting, associating, analyzing will soon make it meaningful and interesting.

3. Intention to Remember

Bending of one's energies toward a given end is called a mental set, and a positive, open mental set affects memory positively. Ego involvement promotes intention to remember.

4. Confidence

When we intend to remember without having confidence that we can remember, the intention is weakened into mere hoping. Use written notes as a prompting device, but form the habit of trying to rely on your memory before referring to your written reminders.

5. Starting Right

Be cautious in learning a new knowledge and habits right at the start. Concentrate on accuracy, not speed, at the beginning. A mistake is difficult to unlearn. Become self-conscious about the error and then work slowly to replace it with the right information.

6. Selection

Concentrate on the most significant things, as it is impossible to master any subject in its entirety. The selection should be judicious in that for some subjects the

fundamentals, major ideas, concepts, patterns, and trends may be important, but in some subjects details are also important.

7. Understanding

There are two ways to memorize: by rote (mechanically) and by understanding. Ideas, concepts, theories and significances and the like are learned by understanding. The more association you have for an idea, the more meaning it will have; the more meaningful the learning, the better one is able to retain it. Always note similarities and differences in ideas and concepts, and put them in their proper place in a larger system of concepts and theories.

8. Building Background

The more background we have on a subject the better we form associations and discern relationships. A well-stocked mind allows more possibilities of association between new material and previously known material. The best way to improve your memory of a subject, hence, is to learn more about it.

9. Organization

A good memory is like a well-organized and well-maintained filing system. When a new fact presents itself, the first consideration is whether to keep it or throw it away. If you keep it, then you must decide where to put it. Organization is the innate tendency of the mind and it prevails above the chaos of stimuli it can process. Shakespeare's 37 plays are less difficult to remember if you remember them in 3 groups: comedies, histories, tragedies. Keep the larger pattern of the chapter and of the book as you progress through it in mind so that you can relate or hook subordinate ideas or details to the larger pattern. Bunch ideas with, associate, or relate them to the big bones of the article, chapter or book.

10. Recitation

Quiz or test yourself as you read through each paragraph or section. This promotes understanding as well as faster learning because it is a more active process than reading or listening. It also tests understanding, revealing mistakes or gaps. Recite in your own words and read aloud difficult passages. Auditory learners should spend more time in reciting orally what they are learning than visualizers.

11. Notetaking [link this to our notetaking page on the website]

Notes should be in your own words, brief, clear but succinct. They should be legible and neat. Review notes when study of chapter is completed and use them to test yourself.

12. Review

The best time to review is soon after learning has taken place. The beginning and the end of material is best remembered, so pay close attention to the middle which is likely to be forgotten. The peak of difficulty in remembering is just beyond the middle, toward the end.

13. Spaced Practice or Distributed Practice

Periodic review is important – but make the sure the intervals between the practice are not too long, otherwise you might forget information.

14. Overlearning

Reviewing something that has already been learned sufficiently is called overlearning. The more important and the more difficult the learning, the more we should reinforce it with frequent practice. Don't waste your time on easy material.

15. Sleeping Over It

Study before going to bed unless you are physically or mentally overtired. Freshly learned material is better remembered after a period of sleep than after an equal period of daytime activity because of retroactive interference. This may not work for everybody